THE BAPTISM OF ROGER WILLIAMS

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HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

Historical Discourse at the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Dudley Street Baptist Church, Boston, Mass. (*Boston, 1871*).

Early Baptists Defended: a Review of Rev. Dr. Henry M. Dexter's account of the Visit to William Witter in "As to Roger Williams." (*Boston, 1880*).

History of the Baptists in Boston, in Memorial Hist. of Boston, Vol. III. (*Boston, 1881*).

Memorial Discourse at the Semi-Centennial Celebration of the First Baptist Church of Fitchburg, Mass. (*Fitchburg, 1881*).

Historical Discourse at the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Emmanuel Baptist Church, Albany, N.Y. (*Albany, 1884*).

A Century of National Life: a Thanksgiving Discourse. (*Albany, 1888*).

The Baptists and Religious Liberty in this Country: an Address at the Dedication of the Backus Monument at North Middleboro', Mass. (*Boston, 1893*).

Religious Liberty the Trophy of the Baptists: an Address delivered at Indianapolis before the Baptist Young People's Union of America. (*Chicago, 1894*).

Historical Address at the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the First Baptist Sunday School in Providence, R.I. (*Providence, 1894*).

A Summer Visit of Three Rhode Islanders to the Massachusetts Bay in 1651: a new edition of "Early Baptists Defended," enlarged by the addition of valuable matter. (*Providence, 1896*).

The Mother Church: a brief Account of the Origin and early History of the First Baptist Church in Providence, R. I. (*Philadelphia, 1896*).

THE
BAPTISM OF ROGER WILLIAMS

A REVIEW
OF REV. DR. W. H. WHITSITT'S INFERENCE

BY

HENRY MELVILLE KING

PASTOR OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
PROVIDENCE

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY REV. JESSE B. THOMAS, D D.

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PROVIDENCE
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To

THE SACRED MEMORY

OF

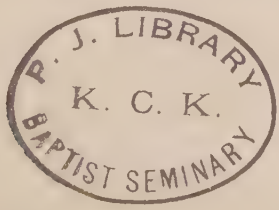
Rev. Samuel Lunt Caldwell, D.D.

FOR FIFTEEN YEARS PASTOR OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN PROVIDENCE, WHOSE FRIENDSHIP ENRICHED MY EARLY MINISTRY AND INTO WHOSE LABORS I HAVE NOW ENTERED; WHO, AS PASTOR, THEOLOGICAL PROFESSOR AND COLLEGE PRESIDENT, GAVE TO HIS THREEFOLD SERVICE IN LIFE A HEART OF UNQUESTIONED DEVOTION, A SPIRIT OF BROAD CATHOLICITY AND A MIND OF RARE CULTURE; AND WHO, BY HIS CAREFUL HISTORICAL RESEARCHES, DID MUCH TO ELUCIDATE AND PRESERVE THE HISTORY OF "THE MOTHER CHURCH."

INTRODUCTION

"Eternal vigilance is the price" of truth as well as "liberty." An uncorrected misstatement of historic detail, even as to circumstances apparently of minor significance, may prove like a trifling crevice in the levee which, neglected, rapidly swells to a devastating crevasse.

It is, therefore, a sagacious as well as honorable instinct that prompts suspicion and challenge of every proposed re-interpretation of the facts or documents of the past which involves a radical reversal of wide-spread and supposedly authoritative opinion. Especially ought we to be sensitive to the proposal of any novel and eccentric theory as to the acts or words of our spiritual ancestors where it may, even inferentially or remotely, bring into question their long established reputation for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sagacity, sincerity, and unflinching loyalty to conviction. A people not zealous to cherish and jealous to protect the good name of their fathers have already ceased to appreciate the legacy transmitted to them at so great cost, and will soon cease to imitate the virtues they have undervalued.

It is a cherished opinion of the Baptists that when men have been brought face to face with the Word of God, unhindered by the perversions of priests and the fogs of tradition, they have inevitably recognized not only *that* they ought, but *how* they ought, to be baptized: for the one is as unequivocally clear in the language of the New Testament as the other. Noticing Christ's test of loyalty, "If a man love me he will keep my *words*," it is not to be lightly presumed that they would ignore or toy with an express command in the one case more readily than in the other. Accordingly it turns out as was to be expected, that the departure from the rule and practice of the New Testament, the immersion of believers, in the history of the church,

was slow and hesitating, and long recognized as justifiable only in exceptional conditions and when artificially buttressed by specific ecclesiastical authority. The substitution of pouring or sprinkling as the normal type of baptism was never hinted at until the sixteenth century. In England the belief in the necessity of immersion, save in extraordinary cases, was uniform up to the date of the Westminster Assembly in 1644. It seems an extravagant assumption, therefore, that while all the rest of the world had steadily maintained the priority of immersion as the Gospel type, the anti-Pedobaptists alone had first voluntarily repudiated it. [1] Yet this is, substantially, the proposition to which Dr. Whitsitt has committed himself, and to which Dr. King has here convincingly replied. The whole setting of the case, as well as the undisturbed and unquestioned belief of the community among whom the facts occurred, are hostile to Dr. Whitsitt's view, and there is little reason to believe that it can ultimately justify itself.

As to the case of Roger Williams, in which Dr. King and his people are peculiarly and properly concerned, there is, as is here made manifest, still less reason shown for the reversal of hitherto unquestioned opinion. To contradict the positive testimony in the case, buttressed by an immense body of preliminary presumption, under so slender pretexts, is to attempt the substitution of fancy for fact, and to turn back the whole sweep of historic judgment.

I sympathize heartily with the feeling that the maintenance of historic truth in the particulars here discussed is of high importance to us and to all Christians, and well worthy of the industry and sagacity bestowed upon it, and esteem it a privilege heartily to commend so careful, courteous, candid, and thorough a presentation of the subject to the impartial inquirer.

J. B. THOMAS.

Newton Theological Institution,
May 20, 1897.

THE BAPTISM OF ROGER WILLIAMS.

President William H. Whitsitt of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, in his recent volume entitled "A Question in Baptist History," in which he has undertaken to prove that immersion was not introduced among the English Baptists until the year 1641, has an appendix upon the "Baptism of Roger Williams." The addition of this appendix to the body of the book reveals conclusively the mental process of the author. Having first established, as he believed, the late introduction of immersion among the Baptists in England, he infers that Roger Williams, whose baptism occurred two or three years before

1641, could not have been in advance of the English Baptists, that is, could not have been immersed. He would attach it as a corollary to his main proposition.

It is an inferential kind of history, which is of the most uncertain and untrustworthy nature. The author has indeed ransacked the pages of history to find something to support his inference, and has brought the results of his search together in the appendix of his book. But it is safe to say that had he not first accepted the theory in reference to the English Baptists, he would never have called in question the belief in the immersion of Roger Williams, which has been accepted without the suspicion of a dissent for two hundred and fifty years.

It should be stated that in the summer of 1880 there appeared in *The In-*

dependent two articles advocating the views which Dr. Whitsitt has promulgated in his book. They appeared anonymously in the form of editorials, and were supposed by most persons to have come from the editor's pen. Some suspected that Dr. Henry M. Dexter, editor of *The Congregationalist*, might be the author of them, as he was publishing about that time similar views in his own paper. The views were vigorously called in question at the time by Baptist papers, especially by the *Zion's Advocate* of Portland, Me., edited by the accomplished historian of Baptist and Anabaptist history, Dr. Henry S. Burrage. The discussion, however, soon ended, and the inference as to the non-immersion of Roger Williams was so unwarranted and unreasonable, so contrary to the testimony of his contemporaries and

all the known facts in the case, that it had no influence whatever, and was regarded by most persons as not worthy of serious consideration.

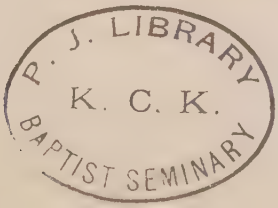
It was not until April, 1896, that Dr. Whitsitt acknowledged the paternity of the articles in *The Independent*, greatly to the surprise of Baptists North and South. This he did in an article in *The Examiner*, called out by a criticism of ours upon two articles by him which appeared in *Johnson's New Universal Cyclopædia*, published in January, 1893, upon the Anabaptists and the Baptists. Our criticism was published in *The Examiner* in the previous month, very soon after our attention had been called to the Cyclopædia, and proved to be the match that kindled an extended conflagration, which has raged with special fierceness in the South. In the Cyclo-

pædia Dr. Whitsitt published his views for the first time over his own signature. Speaking of the Baptism of Roger Williams, he says: "The ceremony was most likely performed by sprinkling; the Baptists of England had not yet adopted immersion, and there is no reason which renders it probable that Williams was in advance of them in that regard." The heated discussion which followed, compelled Dr. Whitsitt in self-justification to issue his book—"A Question in Baptist History." This is a brief account of the controversy into which the denomination has been forced by the publication of these novel views of Baptist history in a Cyclopædia which, it would seem, should have opened its pages to those historic facts only, which are generally accepted, and not to novel views and alleged probabilities.

The arguments which Dr. Whitsitt has brought forward in the appendix to substantiate his inference, are of a shadowy, unsubstantial character, which in themselves would not have suggested the inference, but have rather been suggested by the inference, which was searching in every direction, and was quick to avail itself of anything that could be made to appear to support it in its weakness. The most that Dr. Whitsitt has been able to do, even in his own judgment, by the use of his inference and arguments combined, is to establish a probability, a probability however which, so far as we are informed, has not commended itself to the judgment of any other historian. After a discussion covering eighteen pages, in which the reasoning is in part purely hypothetical, and in no small

part utterly irrelevant, he concludes the appendix with these cautious words: "In the present state of information it would be unwise to pronounce with certainty any conclusion regarding this question. However, within the limits of the uncertainty which is freely acknowledged, the weight of evidence appears to incline very clearly towards the view that Roger Williams was sprinkled and not immersed at Providence in 1639."

This somewhat contradictory utterance, in which the author at first freely acknowledges the great uncertainty of the question, and confesses it to be unwise to pronounce any conclusion, and then, remembering that he must justify himself in such circumstances in raising the question at all, declares that the weight of evidence appears to incline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very clearly towards the view that Roger Williams was sprinkled, (that is, very clearly "within the limits of the uncertainty"), is the conclusion of the whole matter, and the largest result that the most persistent investigation has been able to secure. It may be doubted whether a probability, seriously modified by the limits of a great uncertainty, is worth the prodigious effort that has been put forth. Indeed it may be asked is a historian justified in publicly assailing a belief which has been established for eight generations, unless he has been able to reach in his own mind a conclusion more positive than an opposite probability which is still surrounded by the limits of a great uncertainty? Such an assault demands for its justification evidence of a nature sufficiently positive, at least, to go far

to disprove the belief universally held, and such conduct has a tendency to cast a suspicion upon all matters of faith, however sacred. Life is too short to be wasted in trying to establish probabilities, when the probability is of no conceivable value, and life is too short to be compelled to use it in defending the truth against those whose only weapon which they have been able to forge, is an alleged probability confessedly weakened by a great uncertainty.

It is not the purpose of this review to discuss fully the main question of Dr. Whitsitt's book, viz. the time of the introduction of immersion among the English Anabaptists. It may be said, however, in passing, that in the judgment of many scholars, Dr. Whitsitt has been no more successful than was the late Dr. Henry M. Dexter in his

volume entitled "The True Story of John Smyth, the Se-Baptist," published in 1881, in proving that prior to 1641 immersion was not practiced among the Baptists in England. Dr. Whitsitt has produced little testimony beyond what Dr. Dexter had presented, indeed he has drawn largely from Dr. Dexter's documents, and has failed to examine carefully the originals, in some instances quoting Dr. Dexter's personal, parenthetical comments as if they were a part of the original documents.

Three remarks may be made in reference to Dr. Whitsitt's treatment of the English question.

First, he has failed utterly to present an accurate picture of the time. His historic setting is faulty and misleading, and the impression which it makes is erroneous. He gives no adequate re-

cognition to the prevalence of immersion on the continent of Europe for a hundred years and more, in Switzerland, Poland, Silesia, Lithuania, Pomerania and Holland. Indeed, he virtually denies it, saying "few Anabaptists anywhere were immersionists," and "none of the Anabaptists of Holland or of the adjacent sections of Germany were immersionists." In the judgment of leading historians his statements are far from correct. He also fails to represent fairly the condition of thought in England on the question of immersion, as disclosed in the language of the Prayer Book of Edward VI., in the long continuance of the immersion of infants in the Church of England, even down to the middle of the seventeenth century,*

*It is a fact well known, as stated by Dean Stanley in "Christian Institutions," p. 18, that "Edward the

and in the action of the Westminster Assembly in 1644, which though it rejected immersion, rejected it by a majority vote of only one. This was not only "radical action against immersion," as Dr. Whitsitt says, but it revealed the significant fact that the Assembly, and probably the denomination which it represented, were about equally divided in sentiment as to the validity of immersion as scriptural baptism. And this was three years after the time of the alleged introduction of immersion among the English Baptists. It should

Sixth and Elizabeth were both immersed." It is a fact, perhaps not so well known, that infant immersion was practiced in England not infrequently for a hundred years longer. A clergyman of the Church of England, named Blake, who was rector at Tamworth, writing in 1644, said: "I have been an eye-witness of many infants dipped, and I know it to have been the constant practice of many ministers in their places for many years together."

be added that the "Confession of the Seven Churches" in London, which distinctly declared that the only true baptism was immersion, was issued in 1643, a fact which requires us to believe that, if immersion had been unknown until 1641, within the brief period of two years these churches had abandoned a custom which they had always observed, and entered upon a new way. A marvellously rapid change of sentiment and practice! And there is ample proof that these seven churches constituted but a small fraction of the whole number of churches in England, which practiced immersion at the time when the Confession was published.*

*Prof. J. B. Thomas, D. D., Professor of Church History in the Newton Theological Institution, in an article in the *Western Recorder* of Dec. 17, 1896, says: "Let it be noted that the first edition of the 'Confession

Indeed so widespread was the Baptist sentiment in England in the first half of the seventeenth century that its seeds were brought to this country among the first settlers in Plymouth and the Massachusetts Bay, there being those among them who favored not only infant immersion, but also adult immersion, a fact which Dr. Whitsitt has overlooked.

of the Seven Churches' was issued in 1643, affirming immersion to be the only true baptism. Now Baillie, a jealous and sagacious contemporary witness, affirms that this Confession expressed the already matured faith of forty-six churches, 'as I take it, in and about London.' Featley, an important figure in this discussion, reckoned them, as I remember, at fifty-two, and Neal distinctly affirms that there were at that date, '54 congregations of English Baptists in England who confined Baptism to dipping,' their illiterate preachers going about the country, and 'making proselytes of all who would submit to their immersion.' We are required then to believe, either that out of one congregation of 'immersers' organized in 1641, there had grown this great company in two years, or that in the

Secondly, Dr. Whitsitt has made an unjustifiable use of the authorities from which he has quoted. Following Dr. Dexter closely he has quoted documents as favoring the late introduction of immersion as "a new baptism," which had no reference whatever to immersion.

same time fifty or more existing Baptist congregations had simultaneously repudiated a custom to which they were traditionally attached and which was in universal use, in behalf of another custom which nobody among them had ever practiced or even heard of: they without any newly assigned or intelligible motive, suddenly ceased wholly to do what they had always and uniformly been accustomed to do, and began exclusively to do what they had never done at all. So toppling a hypothesis surely needs massive support.

I am not persuaded that this support has been furnished or can be furnished. I recognize no important evidence that was not apparently accessible to Crosby in his day, and see no satisfactory reason for abandoning his opinion that immersion in England long preceded the date named by Neal, and now [that is in 1643] reaffirmed."

Both of these authors seem to be ignorant of the fact that at that time the baptismal controversy was hottest around the validity and sacredness of infant baptism, and many of the publications were prepared by Pedobaptist ministers against members of their own congregations who were distrusting and repudiating their infant baptism, and seeking a new baptism. A careful examination of these documents would have shown that they had no reference to the genuine Baptist question, and no bearing upon it whatever. The "new baptism" to which frequent reference was made, was not immersion, but a new administration of their early baptism. Immersion could be tolerated, indeed it had been practiced by themselves or their fathers of the immediately preceding generation, but the repudiation of in-

fant baptism could not be tolerated. A similar condition of things existed in this country. Dunster, the first President of Harvard College, rejected infant baptism, and was set aside. Chauncy believed in infant immersion as required by the Scriptures, and practiced it, immersing his own children, and it appears, believed also in adult immersion, but this was no obstacle to his election as Dunster's successor.

Dr. S. L. Caldwell (Historical Discourse on the Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the First Baptist Church in Providence, p. 29) says: "The first president of Harvard College, Henry Dunster, denied the baptism of infants, asserting that, 'All instituted Gospel worship hath some express word of Scripture, but Pedobaptism hath none,' and for this heresy was obliged to re-

sign. Charles Chauncy was elected his successor, but he was as bad a heretic the other way, for he held that 'baptism ought to be only by dipping or plunging the whole body under water, whether in the case of children or adults.' Quincy *Hist. Harv. Coll.* I. 18. Mather *Magnalia* I. 367." It is hardly correct to say that Chauncy was "as bad a heretic" as Dunster in Puritan esteem. The head and front of Dunster's offending was the rejection of infant baptism. That, not belief in immersion, was the chief heresy of the time.

Moreover Dr. Whitsitt's treatment of such documents as Dr. Featley's "Epistle Dedicatory," and "Dippers Dipt," and the "Jessey Church Records," upon which he relies as his main support, does not commend itself as defen-

sible. Sentences omitted from Featley, and from other authors, not only destroy the force of the sentences quoted, but array the entire documents against Dr. Whitsitt's position. His quotations are terminated sometimes where they need to be in order to serve and not defeat his purpose. Dr. Whitsitt refuses to accept the statement of Dr. Featley that for twenty years prior to 1644 the Baptists had "defiled the rivers in his vicinity with their impure washings," because the statement is contradicted by his interpretation of the "Jessey Church Records." It would have been more reasonable to infer from the explicit statement of Dr. Featley that his interpretation of the "Jessey Church Records" was erroneous, and needed to be revised and rectified.

The "Jessey Church Records," in

which Dr. Whitsitt thinks that Gould, who first published them, included what appears to be a part of the so-called "Kiffen Manuscript," have yet to be authenticated. The Records without the manuscript have no bearing whatever upon the question under discussion. The "Kiffen Manuscript" is of such doubtful character that it may prove to be of no more value than the so-called "Epworth and Crowle Records," which are now generally believed to have been forgeries. If the "Jessey Church Records" are set aside as untrustworthy, the central pillar of Dr. Whitsitt's structure falls to the ground.* If they are allowed to stand,

*Since these pages were written the expected has happened. It has been ascertained that the supposed extracts from the so-called "Jessey Church Records," which are the corner stone of Dr. Whitsitt's theory, to which he has devoted one entire chapter, and referred

Dr. Whitsitt builds upon them a superstructure, which they are utterly unable to bear, when they are rightly analyzed and understood.

Thirdly, Dr. Whitsitt has passed by documents, the existence and character of which are well known, which disprove his position and declare as plainly and unmistakably as words can declare it, that the immersion of believers was recognized as scriptural baptism, and practiced in England by those who were called Anabaptists for a whole century and more prior to 1641. It

elsewhere between twenty and thirty times in his small volume, are not in the "Jessey Church Records" The quotations are from "An Old MSS., giving some Acco. of those Baptists who first formed themselves into distinct Congregations or Churches in London. found among certain Papers given me by Mr. Adams." It is certain that it is not a contemporaneous record, but was written later, at some unknown date, by some unknown author, and is of very uncertain value.

should be remembered that the year 1641 was "the year of jubilee" in England to dissenting bodies. In that year the Court of the Star Chamber, and the Court of High Commission were abolished, and the persecuted Christians who had been compelled to worship and administer their rites and give expression to their religious sentiments in secret, "covered," as Dr. Featley says, "like fire under the ashes," now broke out into visible existence, and into open and abundant publications expressive of their views, so that it is recorded "the presses did groan and sweat under their burden." Dr. Featley describes in "Dippers Dipt," this changed condition of things in these words: "But of late the unhappy distractions which our sins have brought upon us, the Temporal Sword being other ways employed,

and the Spiritual locked up fast in the scabbard, this sect, among others, hath so far presumed upon the patience of the state, that it hath held weekly Conventions, rebaptized hundreds of men and women together in the twilight in the rivulets, and some arms of the Thames, and elsewhere, dipping them over head and ears." The dippings of these people were no more new than the meetings, but heretofore they had been under the ban of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, which had striven in every way to suppress them, and their worship and publications.

But such publications relating to the practice of immersion by the Anabaptists, are not wanting. The following publications are specimens, or prove the fact of the existence of such genuine Baptist publications.

In 1523 the Anabaptists in Holland published a book, under the title: "The Sum of the Holy Scriptures," which was translated and circulated in England. On the subject of baptism it says: "So we are dipped under a sign that we are, as it were, dead and buried, as Paul writes (Rom. 6 and Col. 2). The pledge is given when we are plunged under the water."

Dr. W. H. Pinnock, speaking of the Anabaptists in England in 1521 and subsequently, says: "They rebaptized their disciples, whence their name; and taught that the baptism of infants was invalid; they also rejected aspersion, holding immersion to be the only valid form of baptism." (Hist. Reform. of the Eng. Ch., p. 153). This is indeed the testimony of a later historian, but he would not have given it, had he not believed

that it rested upon conclusive, contemporaneous evidence.

Leonard Busher, "a citizen of London and a Baptist," who is believed to have published the earliest known tract in the English language in favor of absolute liberty of conscience (See Masson's Life of Milton, III. 102), was an open advocate of immersion as early as 1614, and undoubtedly practiced what he believed. He said: "And such as shall willingly and gladly receive it, (*i. e.* the Gospel) He has commanded to be baptized in the water; that is, dipped for dead in the water." This testimony can not be discredited.

Thomas Grantham, writing in 1678, when it is acknowledged by all that the English Baptists practiced immersion, said: "That many of the learned have much abused this age in telling them

that the Anabaptists (*i. e.* the Baptized churches) are of a late edition, a new sect, etc., when from their writings the clean contrary is so evident." (Christianismus Primitivus, pp. 92, 93.)

Dr. Thomas Fuller (Church Hist. of Britain, 1656, Vol. II., p. 97), speaking of the marriage of Henry VIII and Anne of Cleves in 1539, says: "Dutchmen flocked faster than formerly into England. * * * * These Anabaptists, for the main, are but 'Donatists new dipped.'" Dr. Whitsitt does indeed allude to this testimony, but only to brush it aside with the remark, "Mr. Fuller was fond of the alliteration 'Donatists new dipped,' and employed the expression for no other purpose than to indicate that the Anabaptists were but Donatists with a new name." But the phrase as used by Fuller is in quota-

tion marks, which shows that it was a common designation applied to the Anabaptists, and was undoubtedly so applied because indicative of the practice of both sects.

In Edward Barber's "Small Treatise of Baptisme or Dipping: Wherein is Clearly Showed that the Lord Christ Ordained Dipping for those only that professe Repentance and Faith," a treatise published in 1641, and which Dr. Whitsitt pronounces the first treatise published in English in favor of adult immersion, the author refers to "A Treatise of the two Sacraments of the Gospel: Baptism and the Lord's Supper," by Daniel Rogers, printed in 1635, which had then reached its third edition. This book, which is a quarto volume, has recently been found in the library of the British Museum by Rev.

Dr. W. H. King, of London, and is not included in the so-called King George Pamphlets. The fact that the book had come to a third edition, indicates that it had probably been before the public for several years, and had had a wide circulation. The author was a minister of the established church, and an intense Pedobaptist. But he was also a firm and outspoken believer in immersion as scriptural baptism, defending it by the same arguments that are used by Baptists at the present time. The rite of baptism is, he says, "To dippe the infant in water. And this I so averre, as thinking it exceeding material to the ordinance, yea, which both antiquitie (though with some additions of a threefold dipping, for the preserving of the doctrine of the impugned Trinity entire) constantly and without exception of

countries, hot or cold, witnesseth unto; and especially the constant Word of the Holy Ghost, first and last, approveth, as a learned critique upon Matth., chap. 3, verse 11, hath noted that the Greeke tongue wants not words to express any other act as well as dipping, if the institution could bear it. And sure it is, if the Lord meant not as (he saith) that the infant should be dived to the bottom, yet He much less meant he should be sprinkled only upon the surface. But rather betweene both extremes, he should be baptized, which word signifieth the true act of the minister, to dip or dop the body, or some part of it, under water. And the essence of Baptism in the very symbolicallness of it urgeth no less. For what resemblance of ingrafting, of putting on of Christ, is there in sprinkling? What typicallness is there

| that is in sprinkling | of our descending into, and ascending out of the water, both which are expressly spoken of Christ in His Baptisme of Jordan? What resemblance of our buriall or resurrection with Christ is there in it?" p. 70.

Here we have an admirable defence of immersion, reference being made to the uniform teaching of the Scriptures and the custom of antiquity, including the peculiar trine baptism of the Greek church, the example of Christ, the meaning of the word itself, and the ability of the Greek language to express any other idea, if necessary, and in addition, the full symbolical meaning of the sacred rite, which is essential to its proper administration. Moreover the author refers to an eminent commentator for confirmatory evidence of the correctness

of his position. And all this is found in a volume which in 1635 had reached its third edition.

But the special value of this book is the testimony which it bears to the well known attitude and practice of the Anabaptists at that time. The author has no contention with them as to the rite of baptism, for in that there was perfect agreement. The only contention was as to the proper candidates. He says: "But the truth is, the exercise of the churches' baptism is upon infants. Here the Anabaptists rise up, pleading the corruption of such baptism and urging the first baptism of catechised ones, and confessors of sinne, and cravers of the seal upon the work of the ministry foregoing in knowledge and faith, which can be incident only to adultes, or growne ones; they allege

that we seale to a blank, to no covenant, and therefore it is a nullitie." p. 71.

It should be remembered that this testimony is from the pen of an enemy; but it is none the less valuable. It may be of greater value on that account. The views of the Anabaptists in the matter of faith and religious liberty were often disclosed by the arguments which were published against them, and the enactments which were passed for their punishment and suppression.

We have dwelt longer upon the general historical question than we intended. But it seemed necessary to present facts enough to show that Dr. Whitsitt's basis for his inference as to the baptism of Roger Williams is without any warrant, and has been presented to the public upon an incomplete investigation, and

an improper use of authorities, which has undoubtedly been the result in part of a too blind dependence upon quotations culled by Dr. Dexter. Further investigation will unquestionably bring to light additional evidence of the fact that immersion was practiced by the English Baptists long before the year 1641, so that it will be to all historians, as it is now to most, not a probability within the limits of some uncertainty, but an established and accredited historical fact.

But upon the supposition that Dr. Whitsitt had proved beyond a peradventure his theory in reference to the late introduction of immersion among Baptists in England, his inference as to the non-immersion of Roger Williams would by no means follow, and such arguments as he has been able to adduce

do not give the appearance of plausibility to his inference.

Roger Williams has given to the world abundant evidence that he was not dependent upon human precedent, that he was conscientious in his convictions and that he had the courage of them in the face of persistent and violent opposition, that he had in him the stuff out of which pioneers are made, and reformers, the introducers of new customs and principles or the recoverers of old truths and customs which had been lost sight of and fallen into disuse. If immersion was to be restored to the church of Christ, after years of neglect, as the outward symbol of a spiritual faith and the initial rite of Christianity, forever sacred and binding, Roger Williams was pre-eminently the man to assist or to lead in such a movement.

No man in modern history has been quicker than he to detect the "new occasions" which "teach new duties." To say, as Dr. Whitsitt says, that he was the child of his age, as Luther and Zwingli were the product of their age, and because they with preferences at first for immersion, "yielded to circumstances which they were powerless to control," and abandoned their preferences, that therefore Roger Williams, who though "likewise a very important personage, was not great enough to stand above the common lot of humanity," did not probably act out any convictions in reference to immersion which he may have had, is an attempt to prejudge the whole question, and prejudice the decision in favor of Dr. Whitsitt's theory.

Indeed it proves too much, if it proves anything, for it proves that Ed-

ward Barber, and Richard Blount, and Mark Lucar, and all the other Baptists contemporaneous with Williams, men confessedly inferior and less conspicious than he, were less the product of their age, and stronger than he to break away from prevailing tendencies and customs. Such a position carries its absurdity on its face. Any man who has made himself familiar with the life of Roger Williams, and has studied his character, and estimated his achievements, will feel that such treatment of him shows an utter failure to appreciate the man whose principles of civil and religious liberty, courageously proclaimed and successfully illustrated, have been the supreme moulding influence in making this nation what it is.

It is not necessary to repeat the oft quoted encomiums which statesmen and

historians have paid to the memory and services of the great founder of the first civil government in the world whose corner stone was absolute soul liberty. To infer that such a man, the independent thinker, the conscientious actor, the courageous pioneer, could not have interpreted the Scriptures for himself, and reached a conclusion independently of other men's thinking or practice, in a word, to infer that he could not have been in advance by the little period of two or three years of a few humble, almost unknown men in London, is the height of unwisdom. Any inference from their alleged practice to Williams' non-immersion is a palpable *non sequitur*.

Moreover, whatever may have been the condition in England, when Dr. Whitsitt aims to create the impression that belief in the immersion even of

adults was a thing unknown in this country at that very time, he must have overlooked certain clear and positive evidence, with which he should have been familiar. Having quoted from Gov. Winthrop the account of the arrival of Rev. Charles Chauncy (subsequently President of Harvard College) at Plymouth in 1638, and of the dispute which arose between him and the church as to the baptism of infants, he claiming that they "ought to be dipped and not sprinkled," Dr. Whitsitt adds: "The immersion of adults was practically a lost art in England and America at this time, and it is conceivable that Mr. Chauncy did not contemplate the immersion of adults." (It may be said, in a parenthesis, that a minister who believed in the immersion of children cannot be conceived of as not believing in

the immersion of adults, if any were found who had not been baptized. If his conscience compelled him to immerse children, he would be little likely to alter the rite for converted parents.) Dr. Whitsitt continues: "If the record can be depended upon, his contention related to the dipping of infants exclusively, and not to the dipping of adults. The baptism of adults for which Mr. Williams began to contend in the spring of 1639 was so widely different from the baptism of infants, for which Chauncy was striving, that the act of immersion in the one case need not to have suggested the act of immersion in the other."

This is Dr. Whitsitt's interpretation of Chauncy's position and all he has to say about that suggestive incident at Plymouth in 1638. An educated man,

who had just arrived from England, and was fit to be the President of a College, somehow had come to believe in the immersion of infants; but that contained no suggestion of the immersion of adults, and it is implied that it was an exceptional case, and had no significance and no bearing whatever on the question under discussion! Indeed, Dr. Whitsitt imagines that Roger Williams "may have felt a prejudice both against the man and his contention," which is purely a gratuitous imagination, for Dr. Whitsitt knows nothing about it. Some one else would be equally justified in imagining that "for aught we know to the contrary" Roger Williams may have rejoiced in Mr. Chauncy's contention as a step in the right direction, as a movement to bring about the restoration of the primitive baptism in which we

know he conscientiously believed. But imaginations, *pro* or *con*, are not history.

Dr. Whitsitt terminates his quotation from Gov. Winthrop in the middle of a sentence, as follows: "The magistrates and other elders there, and the most of the people, withstood the receiving of that practice." Whatever may have been Dr. Whitsitt's motive in thus dismembering the sentence, his action is most unfortunate for the truth, for he omits to quote language which discloses the nature and reason of their opposition. The complete sentence reads as follows: "The magistrates and the other elders there, and the most of the people, withstood the receiving of that practice, not for itself so much, as for fear of worse consequences, as the annihilating our baptism." (Winthrop's History of New England from 1630 to 1649, Vol.

I., p. 398). In other words, the opposition was not so much against the rite of infant immersion in itself considered. That would have been tolerated, if Chauncy desired to practice it, and others desired to have him do so. But Chauncy declared that "sprinkling was unlawful," and not to be tolerated, and therefore his contention was a denial of the validity of their baptism, and if yielded to would have put an end to infant sprinkling among them. That this is the true understanding of the matter is evident from the more explicit account of Gov. Bradford, which Dr. Whitsitt has overlooked. He says (History, pp. 382, 383): "But ther fell out some difference about baptising, he holding it ought only to be by diping, and putting y^{e} whole body under water, and that sprinkling was unlawfull. The

church yeelded that immersion or dipping was lawfull, but in this could [cold] country not so conveniente. But they could not, nor durst not yeeld to him in this, that sprinkling (which all y^e^ churches of Christ doe for y^e^ most parte use at this day) was unlawfull, & an humane invention, as y^e^ same was prest; but they were willing to yeeld to him as far as y^ey^ could & to y^e^ utmost; and were contented to suffer him to practice as he was perswaded; and when he came to minister that ordinance, he might so doe it to any y^t^ did desire it in y^t^ way, provided he could peaceably suffer Mr. Reinor [the pastor with whom he was associated] and such as desired to have theirs otherwise baptised by him, by sprinkling or powering on of water upon them; so as ther might be no disturbance in y^e^ church hereaboute.

But he said he could not yeeld herunto."

We submit that this account of the Plymouth Governor, which in no way contradicts, but only explains the account of the Massachusetts Governor when fully given, presents an entirely different aspect of the dispute between Mr. Chauncy and the church in Plymouth from the one Dr. Whitsitt has given, and reveals a condition of things which he has failed to present. The Plymouth church was not opposed to the practice of immersion. Indeed, it acknowledged that it was lawful baptism, but on account of the climate was not so "convenient" as sprinkling. It confessed that there were some churches that still practiced it, and was willing that Mr. Chauncy should practice it, provided that sprinkling could be re-

tained by those persons who desired it. Those who resisted Mr. Chauncy's contention were actuated by the fear of the consequences which might ensue—viz., that their own baptism might become null and void, or, in their language, "annihilated."

Dr. Whitsitt in his summary disposition of the matter implies that that was the beginning and the end of it, and that the little flurry was confined to the Plymouth church, and was hardly thought of in all the rest of the colonies; indeed, he says that Mr. Chauncy's "sentiments were quite extraordinary among persons of the Puritan school." The facts were altogether different. Rev. Mr. Partridge of Duxbury and other neighboring ministers were called in to argue the points in dispute with Mr. Chauncy. When they had failed

to convince him, the question was submitted to all the churches, not only in the Massachusetts Bay, but in the Connecticut and New Haven colonies. The little flurry swept over all New England, and although the answers returned from the churches are reported to have been confirmatory of the position of the Plymouth church, the whole ecclesiastical structure of the New World was agitated by the discussion of the question of the validity of immersion as scriptural baptism.

It is true that, so far as the records show, the discussion thus far was limited to infant immersion. But, if it was, it did not long remain so; indeed, there were neighbors then who took broader and more scriptural views. Mr. Chauncy remained at Plymouth nearly three years, and then became pastor of the

church in Scituate in 1641. Gov. Winthrop says (History of New England, Vol. II., p. 86): "Mr. Chauncy of Scituate persevered in his opinion of dipping in baptism, and practiced accordingly, first upon two of his own, which being in very cold weather, one of them swooned away." Here he remained as pastor until 1654, when he was called to the Presidency of Harvard College—Mr. Dunster, the retired President, taking his place as pastor of the church in Scituate. This church had already had a noteworthy history. The first pastor, John Lothrop, was pastor of the famous Southwark Congregational Church in London, from which the first Particular Baptist Church under John Spilsbury had seceded in 1633. The year following, he and about thirty members emigrated to this country and planted

themselves at Scituate. Here they were again divided on the subject of baptism, the Baptist leaven not having all seceded in London. In 1639 the pastor and a portion of the church withdrew and settled in Barnstable, where it is recorded there were subsequently "great divisions" on the question of baptism. The crossing of the ocean, and the changing of habitations in the New World, did not destroy the indestructible Baptist leaven. Mr. Chauncy became Mr. Lothrop's successor as pastor of that part of the church remaining at Scituate. In this church the sentiments of the members were far from being harmonious, and all views seem to have been tolerated. It is reported that "many members held to immersion, some to adult immersion only, and some to immersion of infants as well

as adults." Whatever may have been Mr. Chauncy's exact views at Plymouth he seems to have been at Scituate in 1641 an open advocate of adult immersion as well as infant. The following quotation is from the history of the town: "There seemed to be three parties in Scituate at this time; one of which held to infant sprinkling, another to adult immersion exclusively, and a third (of which was Mr. Chauncy) to immersion of infants as well as adults."

We have dwelt at length upon this Plymouth dispute and what followed, because of the proof which is furnished thereby of the condition of faith and practice on both sides of the Atlantic. A belief in immersion as scriptural baptism was not such a new thing under the sun as Dr. Whitsitt would have us think, nor was adult immersion an un-

heard of thing, "a lost art in England and America" at that time. Well has Dr. H. S. Burrage asked, "How came Mr. Chauncy to hold such an opinion, if immersion was unknown among the Baptists of England until 1641? And certainly if Mr. Chauncy in 1638 rejected sprinkling and insisted upon immersion as scriptural baptism, why may not Roger Williams and his associates at Providence have done the same in the following year?"

But it is more to our present purpose to limit our thought to this country, and to say that here a belief in immersion was held not by one person alone, as Dr. Whitsitt would have us think, but by many, and that belief in adult immersion was accepted by not a few persons in the Plymouth Colony at about the same time that Roger Williams and

his companions are believed to have carried that belief into practice at Providence. Indeed, it may be said that if there were no adult immersions at Scituate at that early date it must have been because there were no candidates, and certainly not because of any lack of faith in the scripturalness of the rite, or reluctance of disposition to administer it.

A correct view of the historic setting, of the known condition of things, will make the immersion of Roger Williams appear the most natural and probable thing in the world. The thoughts of the new world were all alive on Baptist questions, and its literature was saturated with their discussion. The whole atmosphere was filled with Baptist ozone. Baptist sentiments were imported with almost every ship from England. Gov-

ernor Winslow, speaking of the Anabaptists in 1646 said, "We have some living among us, nay, some in our churches of that judgment." Cotton Mather confessed "Some few of these people have been among the planters of New England from the beginning." Not only did all the churches consider and respond to the appeal of the Plymouth Church as to its position on the question of immersion, as we have seen, but almost every man who could wield a pen, seems to have drawn it against the prevailing Anabaptistic errors. John Lothrop, in 1644, published "A short Form of Catechisme of the Doctrine of Baptisme. In use in these Times that are so full of Questions." In the same year, Thomas Shepard went to press, urged by "the increase of Anabaptists, rigid Separatists, Antinomians and Familists." In

1645, George Philips, of Watertown, in 1647, John Cotton, of Boston, and Nathaniel Ward, of Ipswich, in 1648, Thomas Cobbet, of Lynn, and in 1649, Thomas Hooker, all published treatises dealing with the question of baptism and its proper candidates, and aimed at the Anabaptists, in which the severest epithets were freely employed. And these are but samples which have been preserved of a vigorous literature, called forth by the supposed exigencies of the time.

It is true that Anabaptism was a thing of degrees, and did not always mean the same thing, and in no instance meant the horrible and dangerous things which many then supposed it, and some still suppose it, to mean. Sometimes it meant simply belief in religious liberty, the separation of Church and State, a prin-

ciple which originated with the Anabaptists, and characterized them always and everywhere: most frequently it meant anti-pedo-baptism; then it came to mean, and that very early, in Switzerland and Germany, in Holland and England and America, re-baptism in the form of adult immersion. It was of the nature of an evolution. All great movements are born by natural or supernatural processes. They have their antecedents, their ancestry. They come "in the fulness of time." It is impossible to account for the great flame of Baptist principles and practice that burst into view in England on and after 1641, when the civil and ecclesiastical restrictions were removed, without believing that the same principles and practice had been slumbering beneath the ashes for years before. It is impossible to account for

the origin of distinctive Baptist churches in this country without taking into consideration the slumbering embers which were transported from England and Wales, and the increasing Baptist sentiment which manifested itself from the beginning of our colonies. It should not be forgotten that the authorities, again and again, proceeded against men and women who were accused of holding Baptist sentiments, and we have the record of their arrests, imprisonments, fines and whippings. These persecutions began as early as 1635, and were inflicted under the name of law in many places, in Dorchester, Weymouth, Rehoboth, Salem, Watertown, Hingham, Dover, N. H., and Swampscott. So numerous were these offenders that in 1644, the well known intolerant law against the Anabaptists was enacted.

The woods of the new world were apparently full of them.

In proof of the diffusion of Anabaptist sentiments, and the increasing number of those who held them, may be quoted the language of Thomas Hooker of Connecticut to Thomas Shepard of Cambridge in 1646: "I like those Anabaptists and ther opinion every day worse than other . . . . unlesse you be very watchful you will have an army in the field before you know how to prepare or oppose." It may be added that when John Wilson, who was the colleague of John Cotton for twenty years, was near his end, he was asked for what sins this land was being visited by God's judgments, and his answer was, "Separatism, Anabaptism and Korahism." A contemporary eulogist characterized Wilson in these words:

"Firm stood he 'gainst familist,
And Antinomian spirit strong;
He never loved the Sep'ratist,
Nor yet the Anabaptists' throng."

Roger Williams was in some true sense the child of his age—the product of many influences; and we refer not now to his great achievement as the founder of religious liberty in this country, although this was true of him in that respect, but to his position as an avowed Baptist and the founder of the first church of that denomination in America. He was first a Puritan, then a Separatist, then one of the first fruits of the Baptist harvest. He had known Rev. Samuel Howe, a Baptist pastor in London, and his acquaintance with him must have been before he came to this country, for Mr. Howe died in 1641, and to him he paid in his "Hireling

Ministry" a glowing and affectionate tribute as "an excellent textuary or Scripture learned man," of which he must have had abundant evidence in his expositions of the truth and the ordinances of the gospel, to which he had listened. Mr. Williams was also acquainted with the Dutch language, which for well nigh a century had been consecrated to liberty and liberal ideas, and whose possessors were the first modern promulgators of Baptist doctrine and practice, in the sixteen century, throughout the eastern counties of England. When he reached Boston in 1631 he was found to be too rigid a Separatist to be allowed to remain there. At Plymouth, two years later, his conduct and teachings aroused the apprehension that he was running "the same course of rigid separation and anabap-

tistry which Mr. John Smyth, the se-Baptist at Amsterdam, had done." And when, three years later still, he was driven out of Massachusetts, and found freedom in Rhode Island, it is not to be wondered at that his growing Baptist tendencies should ripen into the visible fruit of a formal profession, and his conscientious convictions should lead him to desire for himself, and to re-establish for those of like faith in this New World, the primitive Christian rite, which Christ intended should be observed in all lands and ages. Indeed, in view of his associations and progressive development along Baptist lines, in view of his personal characteristics and eminent fitness to be a leader of men and founder of institutions, in view of his acknowledged convictions as to the nature and place of Christian baptism,

it would have been occasion for the greatest wonder, if Roger Williams had not been immersed.

It should be remarked at this point that, after all, Roger Williams was only a very little in advance of his contemporaries in this country, men less conspicuous and forceful in character than he, and with whose mental development we are less familiar. According to the statement of Benedict, several persons attempted in the year 1639, "to found a Baptist church" in Weymouth, with Robert Lenthall, as pastor. This movement, it is said, was suppressed by imprisonment, whipping and banishment. If the statement is to be accepted, (it rests on the authority of Winthrop I. 346) the movement in Weymouth was almost exactly synchronous with the movement in Provi-

dence. There is some doubt as to the trustworthiness of the statement, but it has never been disproved, and is not so improbable as that the Providence movement was not a Baptist movement at the beginning. The traditional date of the origin of the First Baptist church in Newport is only five or six years later than that of the Providence church, and if it is true, as has been generally believed, that Dr. John Clarke became a Baptist through the example and teaching of Roger Williams, it only shows that his mind and the minds of his associates were ripening for the decisive step of complete separation from their old ecclesiastical affiliations, and entrance upon a new church life. It is not necessary to connect the origin of the Newport church with the arrival of Mark Lucar, who had been a member of the

First Particular Baptist Church in London, unless a man is a slave to the figment of a Baptist succession, and is determined to dispute at all cost the reality or the validity of the baptism of Roger Williams and his companions. The date of the arrival of Lucar is absolutely unknown. The first positive record we have of his presence, notwithstanding the most persistent searching, is in 1648. There were influences enough at work, and material enough at hand, without Lucar, to organize a Baptist church at Newport.

Only five years later, in 1649, there were found at Rehoboth or Seekonk, thirteen or fourteen persons who were waiting to receive New Testament baptism on profession of their faith in Christ, and when baptized, constituted a Baptist society in that place. Within

the limits of the same town in 1662, at Wannamoiset, afterward called Swansea, Elder John Miles and his companions settled. They were a company of Welsh Baptists who had been driven from their own land by persecution, and sought freedom in this new world. They formed the first Baptist church in what is now the State of Massachusetts. Mr. Miles had studied at Brasenose College, Oxford, and was highly respected and useful in the new community, though bitterly opposed by the authorities. He not only preached in the whole region, but in 1674, he was appointed schoolmaster for the town at a salary of forty pounds per annum, "for teaching grammar, rhetoric, arithmetic, and the tongues of Latin, Greek and Hebrew, also to read English and to write." And in 1665, but little more than twenty-five

years after the Providence movement, a Baptist church was organized in Boston itself. Here in the very heart of the Massachusetts Bay, and at the headquarters of the most violent opposition and legislation, those who held Baptist sentiments had slowly increased in numbers, and gathered strength for outward organized action. To be sure they were compelled for a time to worship in the suburbs, and were fined, imprisoned, disfranchised and banished, and when their meeting house was built within the city limits, its doors were nailed up against them by the authority of the court; but the church had in it that strength of faith and maturity of conviction that enabled it to live and thrive.

All these movements, following each other in rapid succession, and harmonious in all essential features, prove that the

time had come for the open avowal and defence of Baptist practice and principles. The genuineness of the baptism of one church can be questioned no more than that of the others. No one of them has ever modified or questioned its own baptism, or questioned that of its neighbors. They were all parts of that great religious uprising in the seventeenth century, which burst through the iron walls of old creeds and customs, and the solid masonry of ecclesiastical polities and governments, and planted itself squarely and fully upon the principle of loyalty to the supreme authority of Christ and his Word. No man of that time accepted this principle more heartily and intelligently than the founder of the First Baptist Church in Providence.

So much for the probabilities or the improbabilities, as growing out of the

actual condition of the times, and the associations, the tendencies, the known characteristics of Roger Williams.

We proceed now to consider the early accounts of Williams' baptism, and the numerous and convincing proofs that it was an immersion.

Dr. Whitsitt quotes from Governor Winthrop, and also from Rev. Hugh Peters of Salem, their accounts of the baptism, in both of which it is spoken of as a "rebaptism." He confesses that this word does "not *positively* settle the question regarding the act employed"; but he thinks that in the mouths of these men "that word could hardly point to anything else than to the act of sprinkling or pouring." If Dr. Whitsitt had pursued his investigations a little further, he would have been saved from making such an in-

ference. Mr. Nathaniel Morton of Plymouth, in his "New England Memorial," published in 1669, also gives an account of Williams' baptism, in which he speaks of it as "another baptism," and also as "a new baptism." If Dr. Whitsitt's position is correct with reference to the English publications, viz., that "new baptism" invariably refers to immersion, here is convincing proof of his own kind that Roger Williams' baptism was immersion.

It is enough for us to remember that at that time, as we have shown, the opposition was against the RE-baptism, rather than against immersion, for that involved the repudiation of infant baptism. This was the point about which the controversy raged, as we have said. Immersion was not so strange a thing. Its lawfulness was recognized, at least

in some quarters, and the immersion of children was tolerated and practiced, and adult immersion accepted by some. The churches were up in arms in defence of infant baptism. The RE-baptism was the *bête noir*. The Baptists were sometimes called, and sometimes called themselves anti-Pedobaptists. In the case of Mr. Chauncy the word "immersion" needed to be used, otherwise the point of difference between him and the church at Plymouth could not be expressed.

But conclusive proof of the irrelevancy of Dr. Whitsitt's argument from the use of the word "rebaptism" is found in the fact that when the baptism of the little group of persons at Seekonk by Dr. John Clarke and Mark Lucar in 1649 is described—a baptism which we know now, and which every-

body knew then," was an immersion—it is called simply a "rebaptism." The following extract is taken from the complaint and remonstrance which the General Court of Massachusetts sent to the General Court of Plymouth, because the latter had been treating the religious offenders within its borders too leniently: "Wee have heard heeretofore of diverse Annabaptists, arisen up in your jurisdiccon, and connived at; but being but few, wee well hoped that it might have pleased God, by the endeavo's of yourselves and the faithfull elders w^th^ you, to have reduced such erring men againe into the right way. But now, to our great griefe, wee are credibly informed that your patient bearing w^th^ such men hath p'duced another effect, namely, the multiplying and encreasing of the same errors, and wee feare maybe of other

errors also, if timely care be not taken to suppresse the same. Perticulerly wee understand that within this few weekes there have binn at Sea Cuncke thirteene or fowerteene p'sons rebaptized (a swifte progresse in one toune;) yett wee heare not of any effectuall restriccon is intended thereabouts." (Mass. Col. Records, Vol. III., p. 173).

The word "rebaptism," therefore, had nothing in it by which to determine the manner in which the act was performed. It meant simply that persons who had previously been baptized, submitted at that time to a rite called baptism, not necessarily to the same rite which they had received before, but to some rite which bore that name. Baptism had already acquired a use similar to its use to-day. In enactments passed by the colonial legislatures the immersion of

Baptists was spoken of as "baptism," and their ministers were accused of having "presumed to take upon them to administer the sacrament of baptism," and that was at a date when there was no possible uncertainty as to what they did. When Dr. Whitsitt cites Winthrop and Peters as furnishing evidence in favor of the non-immersion of Roger Williams, his witnesses are utterly worthless; and when he calls them contemporary witnesses, and places them over and above William Coddington who, although a contemporary, uttered his testimony a few years later, he is simply arraying nothing against something, and that something is sufficient in itself alone to demolish Dr. Whitsitt's theory, to disprove his inference and nullify all his reasoning.

There are three lines of evidence,

either one of which seems sufficient to establish the fact of the immersion of Roger Williams, in the absence of positive testimony to the contrary, and all taken together make that immersion as certain and trustworthy as any fact of colonial history.

There is, first, the evidence from Williams' expressed convictions as to the nature of the rite enjoined by Christ and practiced by his apostles. His views found clear expression in his writings, published soon after his baptism, and were adhered to as long as he lived, that is, so far as their scripturalness was concerned. His only doubt, as is well known, was whether the power to administer Christian rites had not been lost by reason of the corruption of the church and its ministry, and whether there was not needed for its restoration a new apos-

tolate. But his views, both as to the rite of baptism and its proper candidates, were unmistakably in harmony with the Baptist position, and no fair interpretation can weaken the force of their testimony in favor of his immersion.

In his tract entitled "Christenings make not Christians," published in London in 1645, he says: "For our New England parts, I can speak uprightly and confidently. I know it to have been easy for myself, long ere this, to have brought many thousands of these natives, yea, the whole country, to a far greater antichristian conversion than ever was yet heard of in America. I have reported something in the chapter of their religion [in his Key] how readily I could have brought the whole country to have observed one day in seven; I add, to have received a baptism (or washing),

though it were in rivers (as the first Christians and the Lord Jesus himself did), to have come to a stated church meeting, maintained priests and forms of prayer, and the whole form of antichristian worship in life and death."

He was discussing the conversion of the Indians, and condemning the method which he declared had been practiced by false Christians among the heathen, the method of outward submission to rites and ceremonies, whereby they had made "monstrous and most inhuman conversions, yea, ten thousands of the poor natives, sometimes by wiles and subtile devices, sometimes by force, compelling them to submit to that which they understood not, neither before nor after such their monstrous christening of them." He could easily have carried out this Roman Catholic method successfully

with the American Indians, he said, had he chosen to do so, and persuaded them to accept not simply a christening, but even a New Testament baptism, and all the outward forms of obedience and worship, which would have been still an "antichristian worship."

Here is a distinct acknowledgment of his belief in immersion as the primitive baptism, with no intimation that it was to him a matter of doubt or uncertainty, or even a fresh discovery, or that it had not been the mode of his own baptism six or seven years before. Indeed it seems altogether certain that he was expressing the belief which he had reached and carried into practice when his separatism culminated, and he broke away completely from his old ecclesiastical affiliations, and openly yielded obedience to the authoritative example of "the

first Christians and the Lord Jesus himself." The phrase "Baptism (or washing) though it were in rivers," has no reference to the "unusualness of immersion" as Dr. Whitsitt insists, but it rather draws a contrast between the New Testament rite and the practice of the church of Rome. He declared that he could have persuaded the Indians to accept even immersion, a rite of fuller and richer spiritual meaning than a christening, but it would only have been "a far greater antichristian conversion," had there been wanting the inward exercises of faith and repentance.

Proceeding to speak of the true method of Christianizing the Indians, Williams declared "First, it must be by the free proclaiming and preaching of repentance and forgiveness of sins (Luke XXIV) by such messengers as can prove their law-

ful sending and commission from the Lord Jesus to make disciples out of all nations, and so to baptize or wash them, *Εἰς τὸ ὄνομα*, into the name or profession of the Holy Trinity. Matt. XXVIII, 19; Rom. X, 14, 15. Secondly, such a conversion, so far as man's judgment can reach, which is fallible, as was the judgment of the first messengers, as in Simon Magus, &c., as in the turning of the whole man from the power of Satan unto God. Acts XXVI. Such a change as if an old man became a new babe (John IV.); yea, as amounts to God's new creation in the soul. Eph. II, 10."

In this extract it is said—"baptize or wash them, *Εἰς τὸ ὄνομα*". The candid reader will say at once that these words must be interpreted in harmony with the definition of baptism given by the writer in the previous part of the tract.

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Not so, says Dr. Whitsitt. Because Williams does not say "in rivers," and again define the meaning of baptism as he did before, therefore "he ignores immersion entirely. It is sufficient to 'wash them into the name or profession of the Holy Trinity,' and is not necessary to 'wash them in rivers', as was indicated above. This second citation appears to prove that Mr. Williams did not regard immersion as essential to Christian baptism."

It is difficult to believe that Dr. Whitsitt is serious in offering this explanation of Roger Williams' language. It is the refinement of ingenuity in an attempt to interpret away Roger Williams from his own definition of baptism, and make him change his mind, and contradict himself within the limits of a brief tract. Because he did not use "in rivers" in

the second instance, it is claimed that he not only "ignored immersion entirely," but he actually "decided against it." Dr. Whitsitt goes so far as to say that the omission was made "apparently of set purpose."

Such reasoning employed to-day would make Pedobaptists of all of us. It is doubtful if Dr. Whitsitt himself could stand the test of his own astounding logic. A man may define baptism never so clearly at the beginning of a discourse, but if he does not say in each allusion to it afterward, baptism is an act which is performed "in rivers," he has changed his mind, he has "ignored immersion entirely", he made the omission "of set purpose," and must be regarded as having "decided against it"!!!

Moreover, lest any one should think that the words "wash them into the

name or profession of the Holy Trinity," as used by Williams, suggest the idea of an immersion, Dr. Whitsitt cites the language of the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, in answer to the question "What is baptism?" viz.: "The washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This language, says Dr. Whitsitt, "indisputably points to sprinkling or pouring." It is "parallel to the language of Roger Williams," (hardly so, but let that pass) and as this "provides for sprinkling or pouring," so must his language "just as certainly" provide for sprinkling or pouring. In other words, because the Westminster divines used language with unwarranted liberty so that "washing" meant to them only sprinkling or pouring, therefore Roger Williams must have taken

the same liberty, and intended the same thing!

Again, lest any one should be misled and suppose that Roger Williams in quoting the Greek phrase *Εἰς τὸ ὄνομα* knew anything of its correct meaning and suggestiveness in connection with *Βαπτίζω*, Dr. Whitsitt has discovered, by the timely aid of Dr. Dexter, a Brownist writer who defined baptism as a "washing with water into the name of the Father, &c.," and even "the sprinkling with water into the name of the Father, &c." From this instance Dr. Whitsitt draws this remarkable inference, viz.: "The circumstance that the preposition 'into' is employed in the same way after the word 'sprinkling' as after the word 'washing' renders it clear that in neither case is immersion the necessary or natural meaning." In

other words, — because an unknown Brownist blundered in his knowledge of Greek and in his use of English, therefore the scholarly Roger Williams must have done the same; and, moreover, he must have escaped "the necessary and natural meaning" of the baptismal formula; and, still more, we are prohibited from ascribing to his language its "necessary and natural meaning"!

We feel like apologizing for dwelling so long upon Dr. Whitsitt's method of explaining away the plain confession of faith, which Roger Williams has left, as to the rite of baptism. It reminds one of nothing so much as the attempts which are sometimes made to nullify the obvious teachings of the New Testament in reference to this initial Christian rite. It may be ingenious,

but it does not seem to be ingenuous. The language of Roger Williams should be allowed to have its natural and necessary meaning. He should be interpreted by himself—not by the Westminster divines in their awkward attempt to justify an unscriptural practice—not by an ignorant Brownist, whose ignorance of the Greek language seems to be equaled by his inability to use the English language correctly—and not by Dr. Whitsitt.

A second statement made by Roger Williams, four years later, of his view of baptism, is equally clear and explicit, and has received similar treatment at the hands of Dr. Whitsitt. In a letter to Gov. Winthrop under the date of Nov. 10, 1649, he gave an account of the baptism which had recently taken place at Seekonk, to which allusion has already been made.

"At Seekonk a great many have lately concurred with Mr. Clarke and our Providence men about the point of a new baptism and the manner of dipping, and Mr. Clarke hath been there lately, and Mr. Lucar, and hath dipped them. I believe their practice comes nearer the first practice of our great founder, Jesus Christ, than other practices of religion do, and yet I have not satisfaction neither in the authority by which it is done, nor in the manner."

Nothing could be plainer than this statement in its testimony to the belief of Roger Williams in immersion as the baptism instituted by Christ, and at this time practiced by the Providence and Newport churches. There is no intimation that the Providence and Newport churches had differed in their practice from the beginning, or that they had not

been immersing for several years, more or less. Dr. Whitsitt strangely perverts the obvious meaning of the entire passage to make it fit in to his theory. The phrase "a new baptism" does not refer to the practice of the Providence and Newport men particularly (although since immersion had been revived in this country for only about ten years, it might with propriety have been called "a new baptism"), but it refers to the candidates at Seekonk, who desired a new and different baptism from that which they had received in childhood. It was a new baptism to them in the sense of being both a second baptism and administered in a different manner. When Dr. Whitsitt says that "Before 1649 both Mr. John Clarke and the Providence men had 'concurred about the point of a new baptism,'" implying that

there had been a time when the two Baptist churches had not concurred, he says what Roger Williams' language does not say or hint. It was the Seekonk people who had lately concurred with Mr. John Clarke and our Providence men, that is, who had come to the position occupied by these two churches. Such a mistake on the part of Dr. Whitsitt is unaccountable. The little company of Separatists at Seekonk had been led to accept the views held and practiced in both Providence and Newport, and sought opportunity to be immersed in like manner on profession of their faith in Christ.

It was perfectly natural that Roger Williams should speak of it as "their practice," for having withdrawn from the fellowship of the Providence church, though in no particular from its faith,

he could not justly claim that its baptism was still his; indeed, he proceeds to show why he had withdrawn, and now disclaimed that to which a few years before he had openly submitted. "I have not satisfaction," he says, that is, his mind could not remain satisfied, "neither in the authority by which it is done, nor in the manner." The authority to administer the rite had been lost through the degeneracy of the church, he believed, and he could not now approve the manner in which the practice of immersion had been revived in this land. That "manner" does not refer at all to the mode of baptism, as Dr. Whitsitt asserts, is evident from the fact that Williams had declared with the previous breath that he did approve of that. It is hardly reasonable to make him flatly contradict himself within the

compass of four short lines. It was the validity of baptism as now administered, and the manner in which it had been re-established, that he found himself now unable to endorse. This interpretation is the perfectly natural and obvious one. It makes his language consistent with itself, and entirely consistent with his known position. Any other interpretation is a painful wrench of the language to make it appear to say what it was never intended to say. This linguistic distortion and this astonishing misinterpretation reach their climax when Dr. Whitsitt ventures to suggest the hypothesis: "It is possible that he [that is, Williams] could not find satisfaction in the manner, for the reason that while he admitted that immersion was scriptural and apostolical he could not convince himself that it was essential to baptism."

There is not the slightest opportunity here to make a place for Mark Lucar as "the first genuine Baptist on the continent of America,"and when Dr. Whitsitt endeavors to do so, and so twists the language of Williams as to make it appear that he "yields that honor" to Lucar, he may be exhibiting an amazing skill and courage as an interpreter, but he is putting a tremendous tax upon human credulity.

It is true that when Williams withdrew from the Providence church, with two or three others, for the reason given, there remained in the church a solicitude about the validity of its baptism. It shared to some extent the view of its pastor, and it contemplated sending a representative to the Anabaptists of the Old World to receive what it might regard as apostolic baptism, that is, bap-

tism by an unbroken line of descent. This solicitude, however, soon disappeared. But when Dr. Whitsitt implies that the solicitude was in reference to the mode of baptism and not its validity, and that it prompted them to seek immersion from Europe, and then adds, "but they finally concurred with Mr. John Clarke, and they were all immersed, as is supposed, by Lucar," he misinterprets the true condition of things in Providence, he again misapplies the language of Williams about "concurring," and offers to the public a piece of conjectural history as unsubstantial as any that was ever spun by a fertile imagination *ex nihilo*.

To sum up what has been said on this point, we have the plain and unequivocal confession of Roger Williams of his belief in the scripturalness of immersion

as baptism, given first in 1645 and repeated in 1649, with no intimation that there had been any change of view, either in himself or in his companions (so far as the mode of baptism is concerned) since the time, six or seven years before, when he openly confessed his faith in Christ and complete submission to his commands, and inaugurated what has been called from the first the Baptist movement in America. For Roger Williams, with his well-known conscientiousness and unswerving loyalty to his convictions, to reach such a belief, was for him to act upon it, and to adhere to it only as a new and equally conscientious belief came in shortly to disturb his outward relations. From his sympathy with the Providence church and its characteristic views and practices he never departed. In 1672, in his reply

to George Fox, he wrote: "After all my search and examinations and considerations, I do profess to believe that some come nearer to the first primitive churches and the institutions and appointment of Jesus Christ than others; as in many respects, so in that gallant and heavenly and fundamental principle of the true matter of a Christian congregation, flock, or society; namely, actual believers, true disciples and converts, living stones, such as can give some account how the grace of God hath appeared unto them."

A second line of evidence in favor of the immersion of Roger Williams is found in the testimony of his contemporaries which has been preserved. As we have seen, the testimony of Winthrop and Peters, cited by Dr. Whitsitt in favor of his theory, is irrelevant and worthless. There is, however, positive

contemporary testimony, which establishes the nature of Williams' baptism beyond a question. In a letter of Thomas Hooker of Connecticut, to Thomas Shepard of Cambridge, bearing date of November 2, 1640, there is evidence that immersion was undoubtedly practiced at Providence at that time. Dr. Whitsitt has undertaken to show that the first baptism in Providence was *probably* not an immersion, and that immersion *probably* was not introduced in Providence until the arrival of Mark Lucar from England, which event *possibly* took place in 1644. Of that event however we know absolutely nothing. In 1640, Hooker, writing to Shepard, alludes to an invitation which had been extended to Rev. Charles Chauncy of Plymouth, with whose immersionist views we are already acquainted, to re-

move on that account to Providence, and says "That coast is more meet for his opinion and practice." The character of the church in Providence as an immersionist church seems to have been well known in 1640, and it was supposed that Chauncy would find a welcome there for "his opinion and practice," or at least that it was a more fitting place for him to proclaim his views and find sympathizers with them. This letter of Hooker's was probably written at the time when the discussions in the Plymouth church were submitted for consideration and counsel to all the churches in the colonies. Gov. Winthrop says that at that time those "who were of the rigid separation and favored Anabaptism" were removing to Providence, which offered a more congenial atmosphere, and evidently the inhabitants of

the Bay and of Plymouth were not averse to their going.

Further and indubitable testimony in favor of Williams' immersion is found in the statement of Mr. Richard Scott, who was undoubtedly a constituent member of the Providence church with Roger Williams. His wife was sister to the celebrated Mrs. Anne Hutchinson, and it was through her influence, according to Gov. Winthrop, being "infected with Anabaptistry," that Mr. Williams was led "to make open profession thereof." This opinion of Gov. Winthrop, which was probably prompted by charity for his friend Roger Williams and dislike of the Hutchinson family, may be taken for what it is worth. Richard Scott, writing thirty-eight years after the Providence baptism and the origin of the church, (at that time he had become

a Quaker), says of Mr. Williams—"I walked with him in the Baptists' way about three or four months, ... in which time he broke from his society, and declared at large the ground and reason for it; that their baptism could not be right because it was not administered by an apostle. After that he set upon a way of seeking, with two or three of them that had dissented with him, by way of preaching and praying; and there he continued a year or two till two of the three left him. . . . After his society and he in a Church way were parted, he then went to England."

This statement is in exact harmony with the known facts of Roger Williams' life at that time, viz.: his identification with the Baptist church, which is called "his society," implying that he had been prominent in its organization,

his withdrawal from it after a few months and the reason for it, his becoming a Seeker, and the time of his first visit to England. Moreover, this statement is from the pen of one who was not only a contemporary of Williams, but was one of those who were baptized by him, and associated with him in church fellowship, "walking with him in the Baptists' way." Yet there is no intimation that there had been any change in the practice of the church from the beginning, when he and Williams walked together in it, until the time of his writing, no intimation that "the Baptists' way" inaugurated by Williams and his companions in 1639 or 1638, had been in any essential feature modified or departed from in 1677. It is incredible, if the church had practiced sprinkling at the beginning (and Scott's

statement goes back to the initial movement), and then subsequently changed the rite to immersion, that he did not know it, and if so great a change had been introduced in the life and practice of the church, it is incredible that he should use the phrase "the Baptists' way" as applicable to the beginning as well as to the end of that period of the history of the church. This statement seems to furnish conclusive proof that Roger Williams was immersed. The evidence thus far adduced from contemporary sources, which is abundantly sufficient to establish the nature of Williams' baptism, has been overlooked or has been left unnoticed by Dr. Whitsitt.

There is still another contemporary witness whose testimony is of the strongest and most positive kind. This

has been sufficient, taken by itself, to carry conviction to some minds which have carefully examined the matter, and has settled the question beyond a doubt. Mr. William Coddington was one of the company, of which Dr. John Clarke was another, which emigrated from Boston on account of the Antinomian disturbances, and settled on the island of Aquidneck, now Rhode Island. The civil compact was signed by eighteen persons, March 7, 1638. Mr. Coddington's name stood first on the list, and Mr. Clarke's, second. Mr. Coddington was a man of importance. He had been a wealthy merchant in Boston, owning the only brick house there, and a deputy to the Court. He was a man of acknowledged intelligence and ability, and withal, an ambitious man. For a long time he opposed the union of Newport,

Providence and Warwick, very likely for selfish ends. In the late summer or autumn of 1651, he returned from a protracted visit to England, where he had been successful in securing a charter for the separate existence of Rhode Island, as it was called, by which he was appointed Governor for life. It was for the revocation of this charter that Roger Williams went to England on his second visit, in connection with Dr. John Clarke, both of them being deputed to this service by their respective communities. It seemed necessary to give this brief description of Mr. Coddington, in order to show his prominent character and position among the early settlers in the colony, and the opportunity he had for being acquainted with its leading men and the events of their lives. He had known Roger Wil-

liams from the first, and had sometimes been associated with him in the government of the colony. He must have been perfectly familiar with the religious beliefs and practice of his great contemporary, and with the principal events of his experience. The settlements of this colony, excluded from the confederation of the other colonies, were bound together by common interests, and lived in constant communication and touch with each other. Nothing of importance at Providence could have escaped the knowledge of Coddington at Newport, especially if it related to that most conspicuous subject of the time, the changing religious faith of the people.

William Coddington, like Richard Scott, became a Quaker. He may have never quite forgiven Williams for securing the revocation of his charter,

which he had been at such pains to get, and which gave him a life-term in the governorship. However that may have been, Roger Williams' vehement opposition to George Fox, and his opinions and followers, called forth from Coddington sharp language against him. Writing in 1677, he said: "I have known him about fifty years: a mere weather-cock, constant only in inconstancy. . . . . One time for water baptism, men and women must be plunged into the water, and then threw it all down again." It would seem as if there could be no possibility of misunderstanding this language or of weakening its obvious meaning. It must refer to Williams' brief connection with the Baptist church and his withdrawal from it because he came to think that the true baptism had been lost by rea-

son of the break in the line of succession. The language can have no application to any other period or act in his life. It must refer to his actual immersion, to his act of obedience to Christ's command, and his subsequent questioning of the validity of the rite, because the authority to administer it had been lost, and not to his simple belief in the scripturalness of immersion, for that, as we have seen, he never "threw down."

The following paragraph is quoted from "The Mother Church," in which we briefly discussed this question before the appearance of Dr. Whitsitt's book. It shows the weight of Coddington's testimony upon minds which at first, after the publication of the alleged late introduction of immersion among the English Baptists, were disposed to take Dr. Whitsitt's view.

Professor Albert H. Newman in a review of Dr. Henry M. Dexter's "John Smyth, the Se-Baptist," published in *The Examiner* in March, 1882, was inclined to accept the inference that Williams' baptism was sprinkling. This he did, as he subsequently confessed (*The Examiner*, May, 1896), "somewhat rashly," and "without having specially investigated the question." A thorough study of the evidence, *pro* and *con* the immersion theory, compelled him to retract his hastily accepted view, and to acknowledge the convincing force of Coddington's testimony. He also said: "I attach little importance to the argument drawn from the fact that the English Baptists had not as yet reached the conviction that immersion alone is true baptism. Williams was quite as likely as any member of the Southwark (Lon-

don) congregation to come to an independent conclusion on a subject of this kind, and was quite as likely to act promptly on his conviction. Restraining influences, which may have delayed action for a number of years in London, were wholly wanting in Providence. That primitive baptism was immersion had been freely admitted by leading reformers, and immersion was the form prescribed in the English Prayer-Book. A highly educated man like Williams did not need the example of English Baptists in a matter of this kind." Dr. Newman added that, when he had reached this conclusion after a thorough investigation, he submitted it to Dr. H. M. Dexter, and found, to his great surprise, that he, too, had been led to adopt the same view. "His answer was entirely in accord with my

own conclusion. He expressed the opinion that, in the absence of contemporary evidence against immersion, Coddington's statement must be accepted as probably correct."

For a man whose predispositions were in the opposite direction to acknowledge that a view is "probably correct" is, perhaps, all that should be expected. It speaks well for the convincing character of the evidence which has been presented to his mind. Moreover, it is an honorable confession for a man to make.

But what reply does Dr. Whitsitt make to Mr. Coddington, and what is his method of disposing of his testimony? He seeks to weaken Mr. Coddington's testimony by weakening his memory. He says: "One's memory is capable of becoming confused in thirty-

eight years, and Mr. Coddington's memory may have become confused. He may have supposed that the immersion of believers was practiced in Rhode Island in 1639 because it had been practiced since 1644; but that was a violent supposition." Hardly so violent, it may be replied, as this supposition by Dr. Whitsitt, for it is nothing but a gratuitous guess offered to meet the force of an unequivocal statement, which sweeps away his unsubstantial inference. Coddington, indeed, wrote in 1677, thirty-eight years after the event, but he was still in possession of all his faculties. He was chosen Governor of Rhode Island in 1674, 1676, and 1678. The nature of the act to which he bore witness, was such that there was little likelihood that the memory would be confused about it, especially in a man

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who had become a Quaker. Such a supposition only shows the utter absence of any plausible argument with which to meet the positive affirmation of Mr. Coddington. Such an affirmation has historical value. Such a supposition has none.

The assertion of Dr. Whitsitt that Mr. Coddington's statement may have referred to Roger Williams' faith rather than his conduct, or to some other period of his life, has already been anticipated, and shown to be utterly groundless. His attempt also to diminish the force of Coddington's testimony, by contrasting it with that of Winthrop and Peters in point of time, has been exploded, for they have no testimony that bears on the question in discussion, and Coddington was contemporary with what he described.

Dr. Whitsitt declares that "Coddington was not an eye witness any more than were Winthrop and Peters." How does he know that? In the lack of positive knowledge it is just as reasonable to say that he was an eye witness. Indeed, there are some things that make it altogether probable, if probabilities are to be accepted, that Coddington was present on the occasion when Roger Williams and his companions were immersed. Clarke and Coddington and the migrating colony visited Providence on their way south, and were persuaded by Williams to purchase of the Indians the island of Aquidneck for the new settlement, instead of going farther, and were aided by him in the purchase. The visit must have been of some days, possibly of some weeks duration. The time harmonizes per-

fectly with the time of the great immersion. It was in the spring of 1638. (The civil compact at Aquidneck was signed March 7, 1638.) That is exactly the time when it is now generally believed that the Providence church was organized. What more natural than that Roger Williams should have taken advantage of the presence of these guests, who like himself were Separatists, and allowed his separatism to reach its logical outcome? What more natural than that this visit of men not wholly unsympathetic should have furnished the longed-for opportunity for his ripened faith to make its public profession? The public had now come, in the providence of God, and Williams and his companions may have hailed the hour, when they could openly declare their full submission to Christ and the in-

stitutions of primitive Christianity, and re-establish in the wilderness of the new world the church of the New Testament. What more natural than that they should have felt that they were not only acting for themselves, but setting an example which should soon be followed in the new settlement down the Narragansett Bay! It is by no means improbable that John Clarke and William Coddington and their associates may have been eye-witnesses of this first Providence baptism, and that Coddington in his testimony, given later in life, may have been declaring simply that which he had seen with his own eyes and looked upon, of the manifestation of that new, free, spiritual life which, in America as in England, was bursting through human embankments and seeking divinely appointed channels. The Aquidneck

settlers could not have forgotten the impressive lesson photographed upon their minds. Through them the news could have been carried to John Winthrop and the Boston church, for they remained for a time in communication with it, a thing which was not true of the Providence church; and in due time the lesson learned by the migrating colonists, (who went out in faith, not knowing whither they went,) as they journeyed through the wilderness, brought forth its legitimate fruit in their new settlement, and the second Baptist church in America came into being in Newport.

If probabilities are to be indulged in, they should certainly be such as are not unreasonable, do not make exorbitant demands upon the imagination, and fit in with all the known facts of the history, so that there may be presented a

consistent and harmonious picture of the beginnings of Baptist church life in New England. But whatever may be the probabilities, the testimony of William Coddington is impregnable, and taken with all the other confirmatory evidence proves beyond a question that Roger Williams was immersed.

Dr. A. H. Newman, in harmony with what has just been said, speaks of Coddington as one "who seems to have witnessed the ceremony, and described it sometime afterward as immersion."

It seems unnecessary to adduce any other evidence in proof of a fact already so well established. But there is a third line of evidence which has its peculiar weight and significance, and without which our discussion would seem incomplete. This is found in the unvarying and universal belief in the immersion

of Roger Williams. Rev. John Callender of Newport was at one time led to doubt, not the immersion of Williams, but his active agency in the formation of "a church of the Anabaptists" and his identification with it. But this "suspicion" of his, for it was never anything more, he subsequently abandoned, as is believed on what is declared to be his own authorization.

Until about the year 1880, at which time the question of the late introduction of immersion among the English Baptists was raised, the uniform traditional belief was that the First church in Providence was a genuine Baptist church from the beginning, and that Roger Williams was a constituent member of it, and its first pastor. When Dr. Whitsitt says "The most reliable tradition on this subject has followed the

lead of Winthrop and Peters, rather than that of Coddington," we are not certain that we understand what he means, for if what he seems to say is what he means to say, it is far outside the bounds of of correct statement. There has been no other tradition than that under the lead of Coddington. Winthrop and Peters have never been regarded as leading anywhere, that is, as speaking authoritatively, as to the mode of Williams' baptism. If Dr. Whitsitt intended to say that the traditional belief is not, in his judgment, reliable, he should have used other words. But when he seems to speak of a tradition as to the sprinkling of Williams based upon the language of Winthrop and Peters, and calls it the most reliable tradition, he is speaking of a tradition which has never had any existence outside of the limits of his

own study or lecture room. And when he proceeds to say that Backus, Stanford, Benedict, Hague, Cramp, Vedder and Burrage "are all in accord with this [imaginary] tradition since each uses the word baptize, and avoids the word dip or immerse," such a claim takes one's breath away in astonishment. Not one of them would plead guilty to the charge here made. These historians have had no more doubt of Roger Williams' immersion than they have had of their own, and have regarded it as no more necessary to define what they meant when speaking of the baptism of Williams than when speaking of the baptism of Christ. They never expected to be misunderstood when so using the word "baptism," and they never have been misunderstood before.

The truth is, that all Baptist writers

have looked upon the baptism of Williams, in the Baptist acceptation of the word, as a settled fact. It has never been discussed before, because it has never been questioned before. To doubt the immersion of the first settlers in Providence, including Roger Williams, at what was called their "re-baptism," and of the Anabaptists at Newport, when they entered into church relationship, as Dr. Whitsitt does, is to antagonize the positive belief of the whole denomination in this country from its earliest expression until now. If a re-sprinkling had preceded the rite of immersion in the practice of either church, it is incredible that John Clarke, or John Comer, or John Callender, or some of the earliest Providence writers, should not have mentioned it. The utter absence in colonial literature of any

intimation of such a fact is certainly significant. But there is positive testimony that covers the whole period of Baptist history in New England.

Pardon Tillinghast, who came to Providence in 1644, and must have been acquainted with the character of the church from the beginning, in a deed to the church in 1711, of the meeting house which he had built, described its members as those who "are baptized in water and have hands laid on them," and in no way intimates that they had not been such from the origin of the church. The preamble to the charter of "The Charitable Baptist Society" connected with this church, which was granted in 1774, contains the following words, "being the oldest Christian church in the State or colony, and professing to believe that water baptism

ought to be administered by immersion only," language which implies that this was a characteristic of the church from the beginning, and a belief on which it was founded. Stephen Hopkins, Governor of the State and signer of the Declaration of Independence, writing in 1765, expressed the conviction that the Providence settlers first organized a church after the Congregational model, and then added, "But it did not continue long in this form, for most of its members very soon embraced the principles and practices of the Baptists [that is, of course, the principles and practices of the Baptists as now understood] and some time earlier than 1639, gathered and formed a church at Providence of that society."

As evidence that in this country, at least, the avowed Anabaptists were all

immersionists, we quote the following statement of belief from the able "Memorial and Remonstrance" against oppressive religious legislation, presented by the Baptists to the Assembly in Boston, in May 1754—"always heretofore . . . . the people commonly called Anabaptists, in all places where they reside, as well in this Province as everywhere else, were looked upon as such by professing themselves to be of that persuasion, ... as also by their distinguishing characteristic of immersing or dipping the person baptized in water." The men who prepared this Remonstrance, only seventy-one years after the death of Williams, bore witness to the universal belief that always and everywhere, at least in New England, from the time of their founder to their time, a distinguishing characteristic

of the Anabaptists had been their method of baptism. They were called Anabaptists in this country down to the last half of the eighteenth century. It is not reasonable to suppose that these men, who stood but one remove from the Baptist pioneers, were mistaken. That belief has not changed from their time to ours. There is to-day the same consensus of opinion that the earliest avowed Anabaptists in America occupied, in the matter of essential faith and practice, full Baptist positions. And Roger Williams cannot be separated from their fellowship.

But there have been unnumbered Baptist writers who, whenever it has seemed necessary to express themselves with special precision in the matter, have given utterance to the unvarying belief in Williams' immersion. Knowles

in his "Life of Roger Williams," and Gammell in his, Caldwell in his "Historical Discourse" delivered at the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Providence church, Armitage and Newman in their Histories of the Baptists published since this question was opened, Guild in his "Early History of Brown University, including Life, Times and Correspondence of President Manning," and many other authors have expressed themselves in a way to leave even Dr. Whitsitt no chance to misunderstand them, and their language has excited no comment, for it has been in harmony with the universal conviction. They certainly cannot be charged with having "avoided the words dip or immerse."

The conviction outside of the denomination has never differed from that within, and its utterance will be found

to be sufficiently definite to satisfy the most critical and exacting. Rev. Dr. Ezra Stiles, pastor of the Congregational Church in Newport from 1755 to 1778, and subsequently President of Yale College until his death in 1795, in an unpublished manuscript now in the possession of the church which he served, says of Roger Williams: "In 1639 he and his church renounced their baptism and were baptized by plunging, Brother Holliman first plunging Mr. Williams, and then Mr. Williams in turn plunging the rest or most of them." *He goes on

*The Baptist movement in Providence is sometimes spoken of as if it embraced the entire population of the place, meeting with no opposition and requiring no courageous conviction. There was indeed religious liberty, but not religious unanimity. In civil and also in religious matters there were great differences of opinion. Says Henry C. Dorr (R. I. Hist. So., Coll. IX, 10) "The majority manifested little sympathy with Williams, except in his negative opinion as to what the

to say: "The first church in Newport was gathered there in 1640, and was Congregational and Pedobaptist under Dr. Clarke, its elder, and continued for about four years, when it became Baptist also," that is, in the same way, by adopting "plunging."

Joseph B. Felt (Ecclesiastical History of New England, Vol. I., p. 402) says: "Having become an Anabaptist, through the influence of a sister to Mrs. Hutchinson and wife to Richard Scott, who went to live at Providence the preceding year, Williams, as stated by Winthrop, was

State should *not* do. No religious society was organized until the autumn [?] of 1638. Out of nearly sixty householders only twelve united with Williams in its formation. During the whole of the seventeenth century, its members were a small minority of the townsmen, and numbered so few adherents that they met in the small dwellings in those days, and a meeting-house was not required until A. D. 1700."

lately immersed. The person who performed this rite for him was Ezekiel Holman, who had gone to reside there from Salem. Williams then did the same for him and ten others, and thus they formed a church." This language is interesting, not only as showing the general belief of students of colonial history in the immersion of Williams, but also the interpretation which, in their judgment, should be put upon the language of Winthrop and Peters, the "rebaptism," of which Dr. Whitsitt endeavors to make so much.

Rev. Dr. Philip Schaff, than whom no modern historian is more worthy of confidence, says (Creeds of Christendom, I., 851): "In 1638 he became a Baptist; he was immersed by Ezekiel Holliman, and in turn immersed Holliman and ten others."

Professor George P. Fisher, the able instructor in the chair of Ecclesiastical History in Yale College says, (The Colonial Era, p. 143) "In 1638 Williams was immersed by an Anabaptist named Holyman, and then he himself immersed Holyman and ten others. There was thus constituted the first Baptist church in America."

But why multiply quotations? The evidence is all one way. The testimony is unanimous. There has been but one traditional belief among Baptists and Pedobaptists. Whether they have called the rite to which Williams and his companions submitted in Providence in 1638, a rebaptism, a new baptism, another baptism, an immersion, a dipping or a plunging, they have all meant the same thing. And until different and indisputable evidence to the contrary is discovered, until

new light comes from some unexpected quarter, the belief of the past which has remained unshaken for two hundred and fifty years, will be likely to be the belief of the future.

Professor Henry C. Vedder, in "The Examiner" of May 21, 1896, says, "In fine, anybody who asserts that anything but immersion has been practiced from the beginning among American Baptists assumes the burden of proof; and ingenious guesses about Mark Lucar and things of that sort are not proofs. They may satisfy the guesser, but he cannot fairly ask that anybody else should be satisfied with them."

We have, then, an accumulation of testimony in support of the fact of the immersion of Roger Williams, which is trustworthy and convincing; first, the fact of a rebaptism being established,

the evidence from his own unequivocal language as to the nature of baptism, given shortly after he submitted to the rite, and repeated down to the end of his life; secondly, the testimony of his contemporaries which is remarkably clear and positive, and has peculiar weight as coming from those who were associated with him in the act, or were eye witnesses of it, and which can only be met by the charges of weakened memory or wilful falsification, to make either of which would seem to be to resort to a desperate method of escaping unwelcome evidence; and thirdly, the uniform, unvarying belief among all denominations of Christians and all historical writers, for two centuries and a half. It may be said that no fact of colonial history is better supported than this.

It should be added, moreover, that if

Roger Williams and his companions were not immersed when they were "rebaptized," we have not the slightest intimation as to the time when sprinkling or pouring gave place to immersion in the Baptist church in Providence. This mother church will rightly decline, after having traced for two hundred and fifty-nine years its unbroken existence to Roger Williams as its founder and to his act of obedience to Christ's command, to surrender its cherished belief, established by all discoverable testimony, at the demand of an inference weakened by a sea voyage of three thousand miles, and unsustained by any fair interpretation of local evidence. It is no wonder that the author of this inference finds himself standing alone, and conspicuous by reason of his solitariness. The whole Baptist denomination

in this country will not readily blind its eyes to the abundant proof that the great exponent of religious liberty in America, acknowledged to be such by all statesmen and historians, was intimately and instrumentally connected with the beginnings of its history here. It is not sentiment that influences us, but historic proof, when we write after the name of Roger Williams, "the founder of religious liberty and pioneer Baptist in this new world."

The question of the nature of the baptism of Roger Williams is more than a historic question. It has no bearing at all upon the integrity of the Baptist denomination in America, or the validity of their rites. American Baptists have an existence, and the fundamental question is, not how or when they came into being, but do their views and

practices conform to the will of Christ as made known in his Word? Our solicitude should be, not to find the connecting link between the new world's religious systems and forms and rites, and those of the old world, but to maintain a vital union with Christ, the great Head of the Church, by the possession of his Spirit and unswerving loyalty to his commandments.

But the question of Williams' baptism involves other and vastly important questions. To what convictions, and to what conduct, will the Word of God lead, when placed in the hands of intelligent and conscientious men like Williams and Clarke, in a free atmosphere, removed from ecclesiastical bondage and oppression, and even from Puritan intimidation and its stern purpose to preserve by force uniformity of faith and prac-

tice? And also, have enlightened souls which have been led by God's Spirit to a truer and more spiritual interpretation of Christian truth, the power and the right to break away wholly from hoary errors and human customs, which have usurped the place of divine institutions, and, of themselves and by themselves, to organize under their new faiths, and re-establish in the wilderness the institutions of primitive Christianity?

These questions Roger Williams answered. God's Word and God's Spirit were his teachers, and he in the enjoyment of freedom from human authority and traditional interpretations, came to hold new, and spiritual, and consistent views of Christian truth, and the Christian church. God's Word had free course in him, and the outcome was significant. It revealed the results of un-

hindered truth, working in untrammeled souls. And then he assumed the right, regardless of human precedent or ecclesiastical sanction, to let his new life and faith clothe themselves in divine forms which had been lost, and flow in divine channels which had been closed. His separation from the past was completed in his baptism. The Jordan of his baptism was wider than the ocean which he had crossed, and it could not be recrossed. It is true that, after a little, reflecting upon the great and solemn responsibility which he had taken upon himself, he doubted and shrank back. But the deed had been done. The step had been taken, and could not be retraced. He had inaugurated the movement, which was to move on under its own divine impulse. He had planted the seed, and he could not stay the har-

vest, if he would. In spiritual things, as in civil, Roger Williams was God's chosen instrument.

It has not been pleasant to give to this discussion the personal character which seemed unavoidable, inasmuch as Dr. Whitsitt stands alone in the advocacy of his theory, and cannot be dissociated from the inference which he has originated, and the defence which he has attempted. For Dr. Whitsitt's personal character and scholarly attainments we have only the highest regard. But we think he has entirely misinterpreted the facts of history, and has shown a sad lack of appreciation of the conspicuous character and service of Roger Williams, who, whatever may have been his imperfections, was certainly one of the immortal builders of this nation, and whose name, it has

been said, is worthy to stand side by side with that of Washington himself. As the courageous expounder of civil and religious liberty, of the right of private judgment and absolute freedom in matters of religious faith, and of the spiritual conception of a New Testament church, he is worthy of the gratitude of this Republic and of the reverence of Christendom.

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